Badi Bod

"Greater than the Greatest"

Shaivacharya Swami Lakshmanjoo

His childhood and his message for children

Index

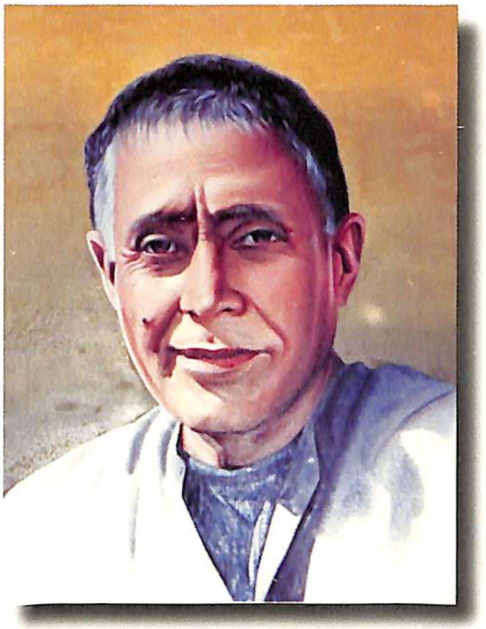
	Story	Page number
1.	Lakshmana's Birth	2
2.	Lakshmana – Playing as a child	4
3.	Child Lakshmana- In the School – I	6
4.	Child Lakshmana- In the School – II	8
5.	Swamiji and meditation-I	10
6.	Swamiji and meditation- II	12
7.	The young Lakshmana's first trip out of the valley	14
8.	Young Swamiji- A keen learner	16
9.	Swamiji and meditation – III	17
10.	Swamiji's first publication	18
11.	Swamiji- A strict vegetarian	20
12.	Swamiji's respect for his teachers and elders	21
13.	Swamiji- His concern for children	22
14.	Swamiji- The perfect teacher for children	23
15.	Taking care of livestock	24
16.	Trip to Gosonigund	26
17.	The little girl and her birthday party	27
18.	Sayings of Swamiji for children	30

Early in the mornings for all of you

Sit motionless. Do not grumble of bad envrionments. Create your own mental world an environments. Build up your character properly. Establish virtuous healthy habits. Understand the glory, splendour & Power of God, who is at the back of your mind, thoughts, will and memory. Keep your body strong and healthy through regular exercise. Become a Spiritual Hero. Shut out the doors of the sences. Still the thoughts, emotions and feelings. Sit motionless and calm in the early morning hours. Have a receptive attitude. Go along with God. Enjoy peace in the silence. How I like these golden rules which have come out from some Divine lips.

Yours as ever
Lakshmanjoo

About Swami Lakshmanjoo



Swami Lakshmanjoo was born in Kashmir on the 9th of May 1907, to a family of pious Brahmins. His father's name was Pandit Narayan Das Raina and his mother s name was Arnimaal. Swamiji was a saintly gem of the twentieth century who revived Kashmir Shaivism through his teachings and discourses. Swamiji dedicated his entire earthly life to its propagation. Swamiji loved children and enjoyed teaching them high moral values in simple terms, giving practical examples to highlight his message. This book presents a few incidents related to Swamiji's birth and childhood. It also has selected stories taken from his life which carry a strong and important message for children.

Lakshmana's Birth

The story of Swami Lakshman joo's birth is fascinating. A few hours before the birth, his grand master (his guru's guru), Swami Ramji had directed the family that the newborn boy should be brought to him before feeding him anything. The child was given a bath and was placed into the lap of Swami Ramji. While hugging and kissing the child, Swami Ramji stood up and started dancing. In an ecstatic mood, he began to sing these lines from the Kashmiri poem of the sage Paramananda:

Jaya jaya-jaya jaya devaki nandanai,
Ghat chaj ta gash aav chyanae zyennai

"We laud you — the beloved child of Devaki, Darkness has disappeared, and the light of the dawn has arrived with your birth!"

When asked what the name of the child should be, Swami Ramji said: "The name of the baby has already been decided. I am Ram and so this boy accordingly will be known as Lakshmana". This is how our master was named Swami Lakshman Joo. (Joo being a suffix used as a symbol of respect in Kashmir)

An ecstatic Swami Ramji, singing, dancing and celebrating the birth of the baby Lakshmana.

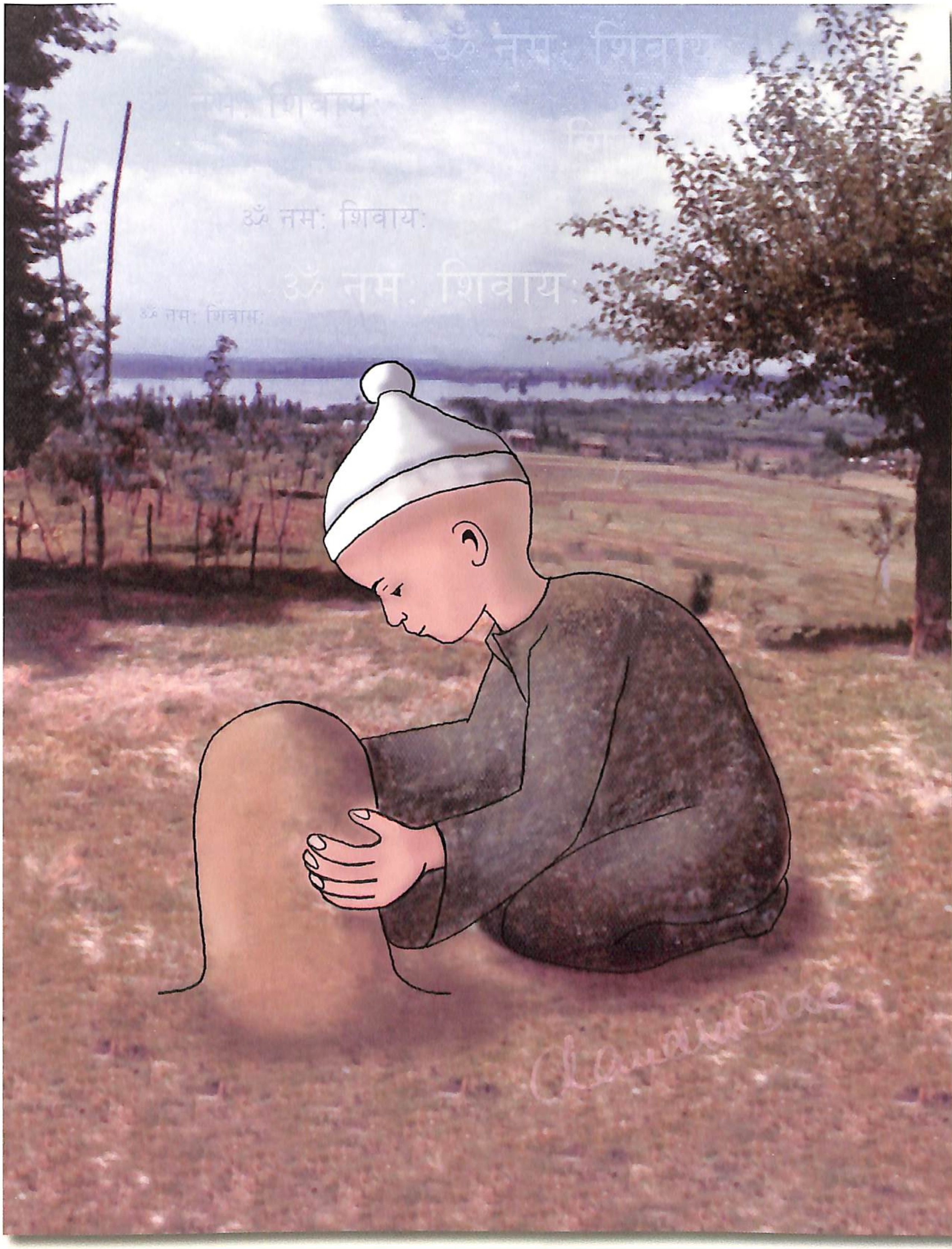
Lakshmana – Playing as a child

From early childhood itself, even at the age of three years, Swamiji was different from other children. He did not indulge in playful activities like the other kids. Instead, his favorite activity was making shiva lingams out of clay.

He would become completely absorbed in this activity. In a joyful mood, he used to say the words: puzae (puja), puzae (puja)….

Witnessing this uncommon behavior of the child, his parents were surprised and amazed. When the young Lakshmana was five years old, his behavior became worrisome to his parents. He would sit for long hours in meditation and isolation, activities which gave him immense satisfaction and joy!

Who knew at that time that these small steps would lead to the gigantic yogic achievements in the coming years!

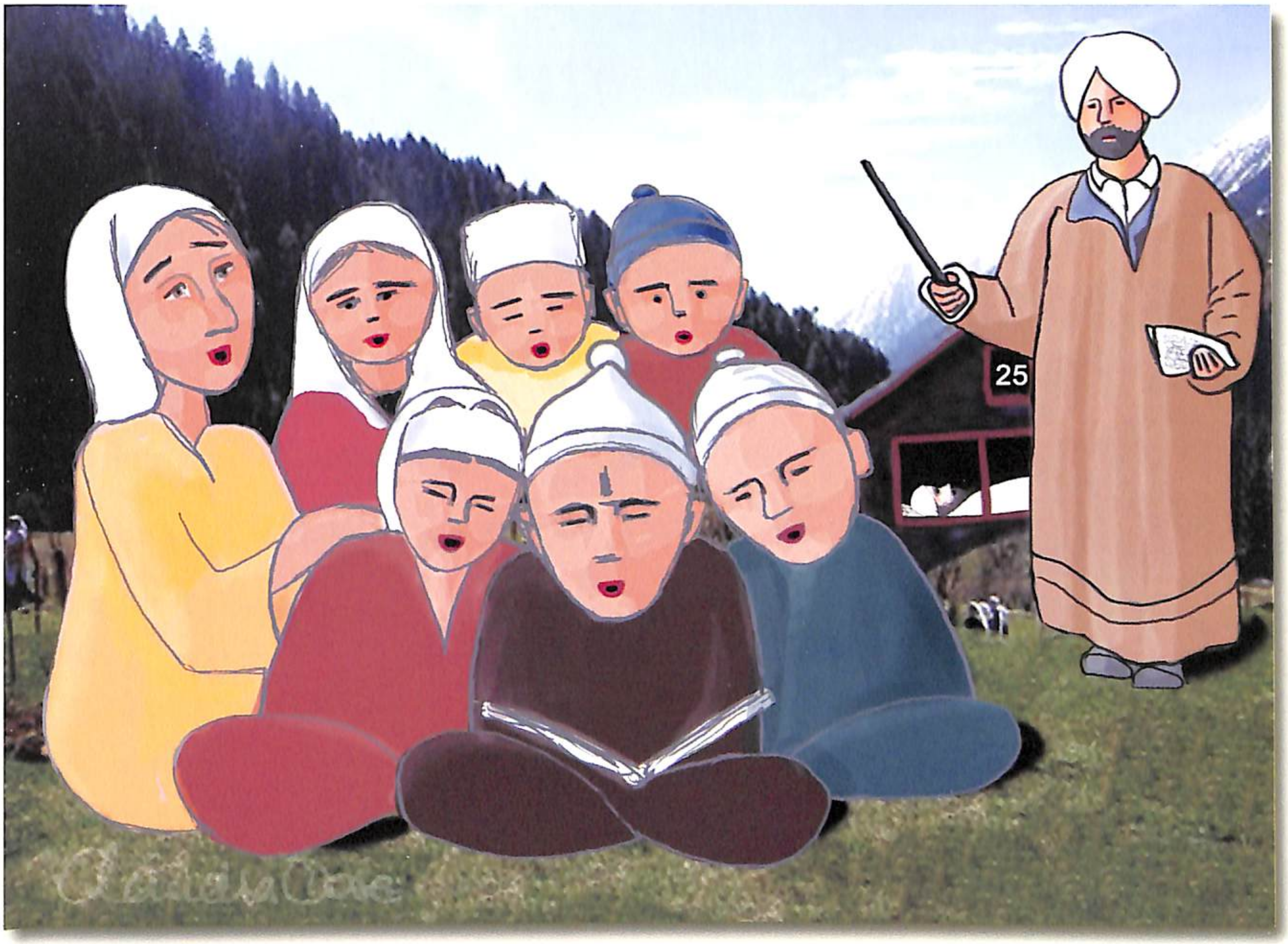


Young Lakshmana making a Shiva lingam.

Child Lakshmana – In the School – I

The child Lakshmana, instead of joining the morning assembly, would tell his classmates not to waste their time in such ordinary activities. Instead, he would ask them to join him in singing hymns in praise of the Lord. One teacher became enraged by this behavior, and as a punishment, gave the young Lakshmana twenty-five strokes of the cane.

The teacher, while giving this harsh punishment, did not know what lay in store. That same evening he fell seriously ill, and astonishingly, in bearing the penalty of his action in proportion to the punishment, his illness lasted exactly twenty-five days!



Young Lakshmana happily singing hymns with his classmates, unsuspecting of the teacher's punishment

Child Lakshmana – In the School II

One of the teachers asked the following question when the boy Lakshman was eleven years old: "What kind of vision do you have when you are in deep absorption?" Spontaneously he responded: I see ***"Badi boda,"*** (Kashmiri for bigger than the biggest). As he later explained: "I saw something beyond what there was nothing bigger or greater."

Swamiji in his childhood used the term of ***"Badi Boda"*** very frequently. While talking to his friends or elders, if he had to take an oath, he would swear by "Badi Boda". He felt "Badi Boda" was the ultimate truth and reality of life.

Young Lakshmana experiencing "Badi Boda"

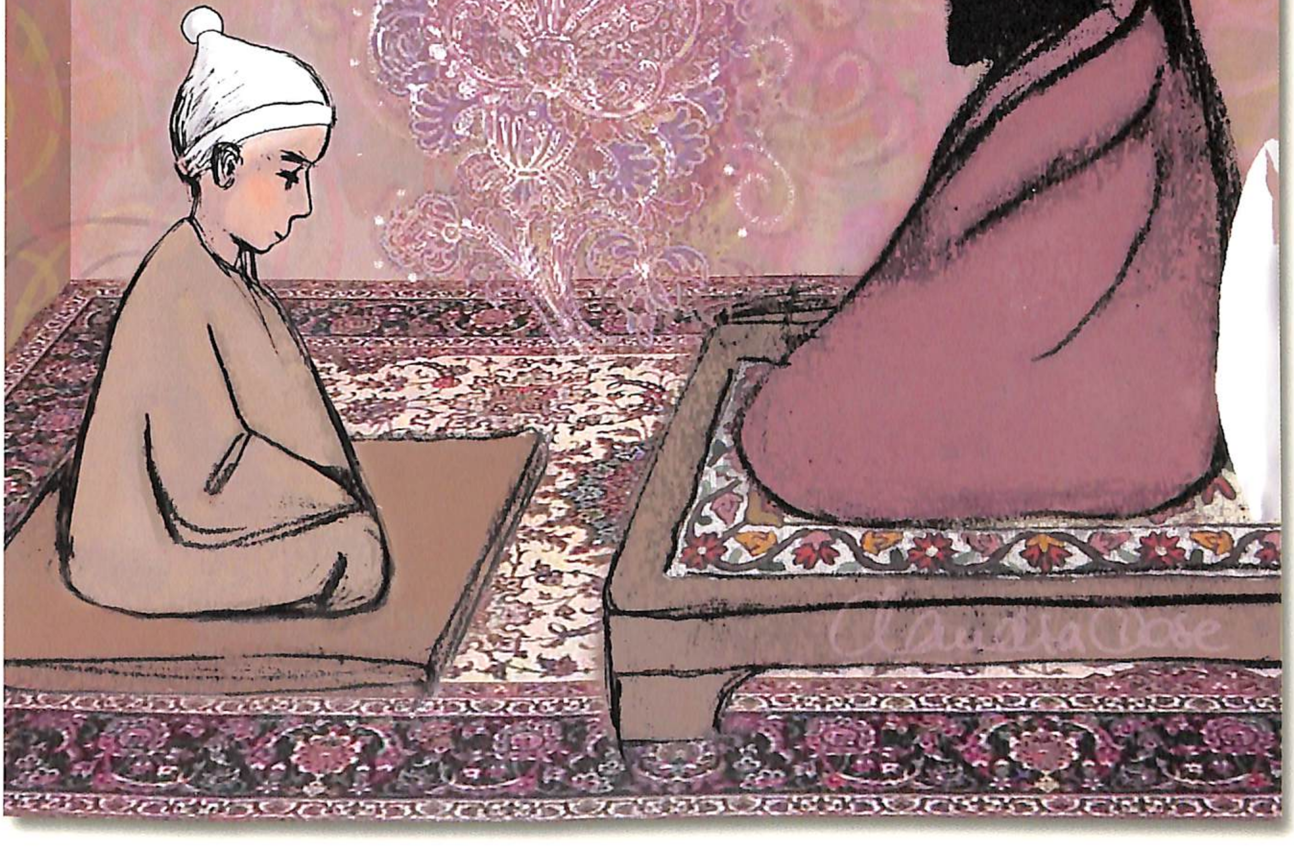
Swamiji and meditation-I

Even though he was only a child, Swamiji persisted in the practice of meditation. As a result of deep meditation, he would become unconscious every now-and-then. His parents, worrying about the health of their young child, took him to see Swami Ram. Swami Ram asked the young boy to demonstrate the manner in which he had been practicing meditation.

The young Lakshmana sat in the meditative pose and immediately gained such a deep state of absorption that even his breath could not be noticed. Swami Ram also withdrew from the external world, sinking deeply into his own being. It is said that both of them remained in this motionless state for nearly half an hour.

Returning from his state of absorption, Swami Ramji smiled. He assured the worried parents that there was nothing wrong with their child, and added that, he wished this kind of experience upon himself. He told them whenever the child becomes unconscious they should apply a little butter on his forehead.

Later in his life, devotees would ask Swamiji, "Why did Swami Ramji advise butter only!" Swamiji would laugh and reply, "How do I know, I was just a small lad at that time!"



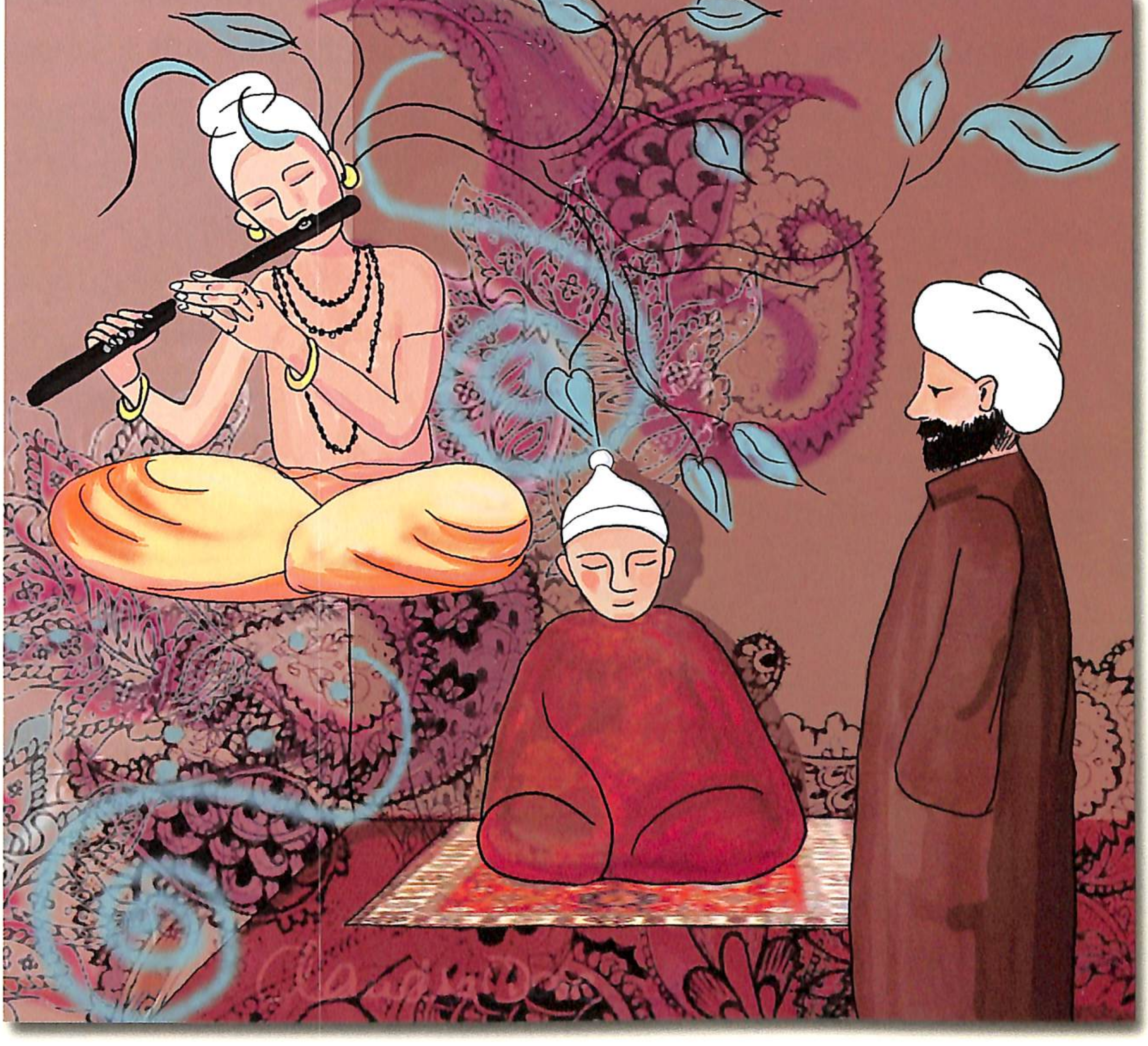
Young Lakshmana meditating in the presence of Swami Ramji

Swamiji and meditation- II

Swamiji's elder brother, Shri Maheshvar Nath Raina, was so attached to the boy Laskhmana that he could not bear to be separated from him for long periods of time. Swamiji must have been barely five years old when one night he saw his elder brother practicing meditation. He asked his brother what he was doing at such a late hour of the night when all other members of the family were in deep sleep. Shri Maheshvar Nath replied: "I am practicing meditation *(abhyasa)* as instructed by my Guru, Swami Ramji". Upon hearing these words there developed an intense desire in the heart of the young child, and he requested his brother for instructions concerning the art of meditation. Shri Mahesvar Nath told him to fix his gaze on the tip of his nose. The child Lakshman did as he was told and immediately became deeply absorbed. Upon seeing this, Shri Mahesvar Nath asked him what he had experienced. The child Lakshmana said: "Nothing of significance". The next day, the child Lakshmana sat in the presence of his brother again for meditation. Soon, the boy began to cry loudly: "Brother, brother, the Lord *(Bhagvan)* has come with a flute in his hand!" His elder brother exclaimed

"Where is the Lord, where is the Lord ?"

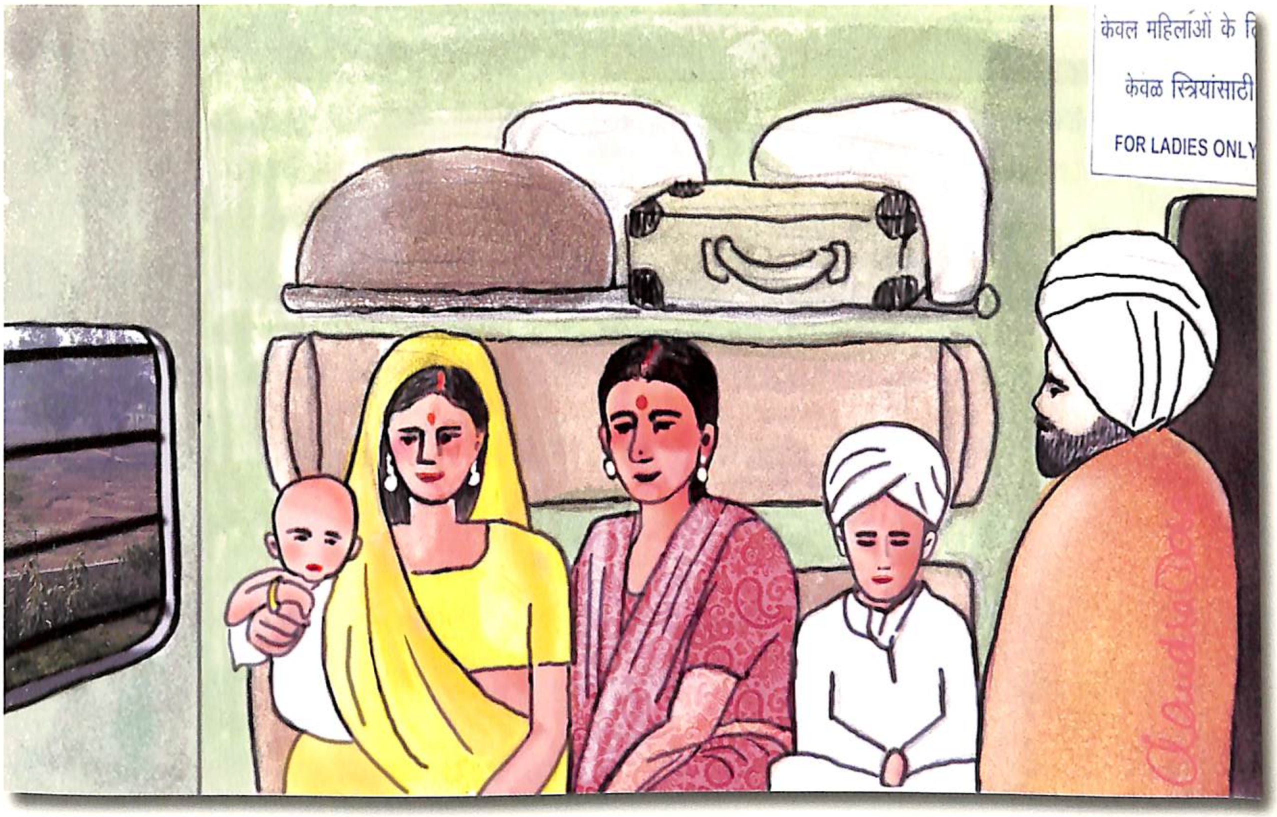
"He is there, now he is there!" an excited Lakshmana replied. But his elder brother could not see anything. Disappointed, he went to see his master, Swami Ramji, who explained that Lakshmana was not an ordinary child but a born yogi who would achieve complete realization in this lifetime. Indeed, the sacred words from the lips of Swami Ramji would come to be very true in the near future.



While Swamiji saw Lord Krishna moving around playing a flute, his elder brother stood, equally excited but disappointed, as he could not see the Lord.

The young Lakshmana's first trip out of the Valley

It was the year of 1918, when he turned 11 years old, Swami Lakshman joo had his first opportunity to travel outside the Kashmir valley with his father, Pandit Narayan Dass. His father had to go to Calcutta for some urgent work, and he asked his young son to accompany him on the trip. While boarding the train for Calcutta at Delhi Railway Station, an interesting event took place. Due to overcrowding and being unfamiliar with traveling in trains, the father and son mistakenly entered the Ladies compartment. As the train began to leave the station they realized their folly, but it was too late to remedy the situation. Meanwhile, the ladies in the compartment complained to the supervisor about the unwanted male guests. The supervisor told Pandit Narayan Dass that he would have to shift to the mens compartment at the next station. The father, of course, was more than ready to shift, but there was a problem; the young boy had gone into deep meditation. Pandit Narayan Dass pleaded with the supervisor that it would not be proper for him to disturb his son's meditation. The supervisor had a kind and understanding nature. By his instructions, the train was stopped for ten minutes at the appropriate station. But Lakshmana did not come out from his meditative absorption even after ten minutes and his father had no other option but to shift to the men's compartment alone, unwillingly leaving his son in the care of the supervisor. It was only after the train had passed four or five stations that the child finally opened his eyes. Finding his father absent, the child Lakshmana became worried. The supervisor, however, was kind enough to take the child to his father's compartment. Overwhelmed by the episode, he told Pandit Narayan Dass that his son would become a great Saint one day.



Young Swamiji meditating in the ladies compartment with his father waiting for him to open his eyes.

Young Swamiji -A keen Learner

One day, as a young child, Swamiji heard his father reciting some Sanskrit verses. His father was singing with intense devotion and the sound echoed and entered in Swamiji's heart. He asked his father, "Dear Father, what is this wonderful poem you are singing? It has touched my heart." His father replied, "My dear son, these are selected verses from the Sivastotravali written by the great Shaiva Scholar Utpaladeva." Swamiji asked his father to explain the verses, but his father, not knowing the Sanskrit language replied, "Even though I can sing them, I do not know the meaning of the verses."

The child was very surprised by hearing this answer. "But how can you sing something without knowing its meaning; I want to know the meaning of these verses, please arrange a teacher for me," he told his father. Accordingly, a Sanskrit teacher was arranged, and Swamiji learnt perfectly in a very short span of time. The message from this episode is simple. We should always understand what we are doing and not routinely follow things blindly.

Swamiji and meditation- III

During his preachings in his later life, Swamiji was very keen that besides their regular school education, children should start practicing meditation at a young age, provided that they had the appropriate environment in their homes to pursue this. On many evenings, he would ask the children in the assembly of devotees to come forward close to him. He would then instruct them "Sit in the posture of padmasana, keep your back straight and breathe slowly".

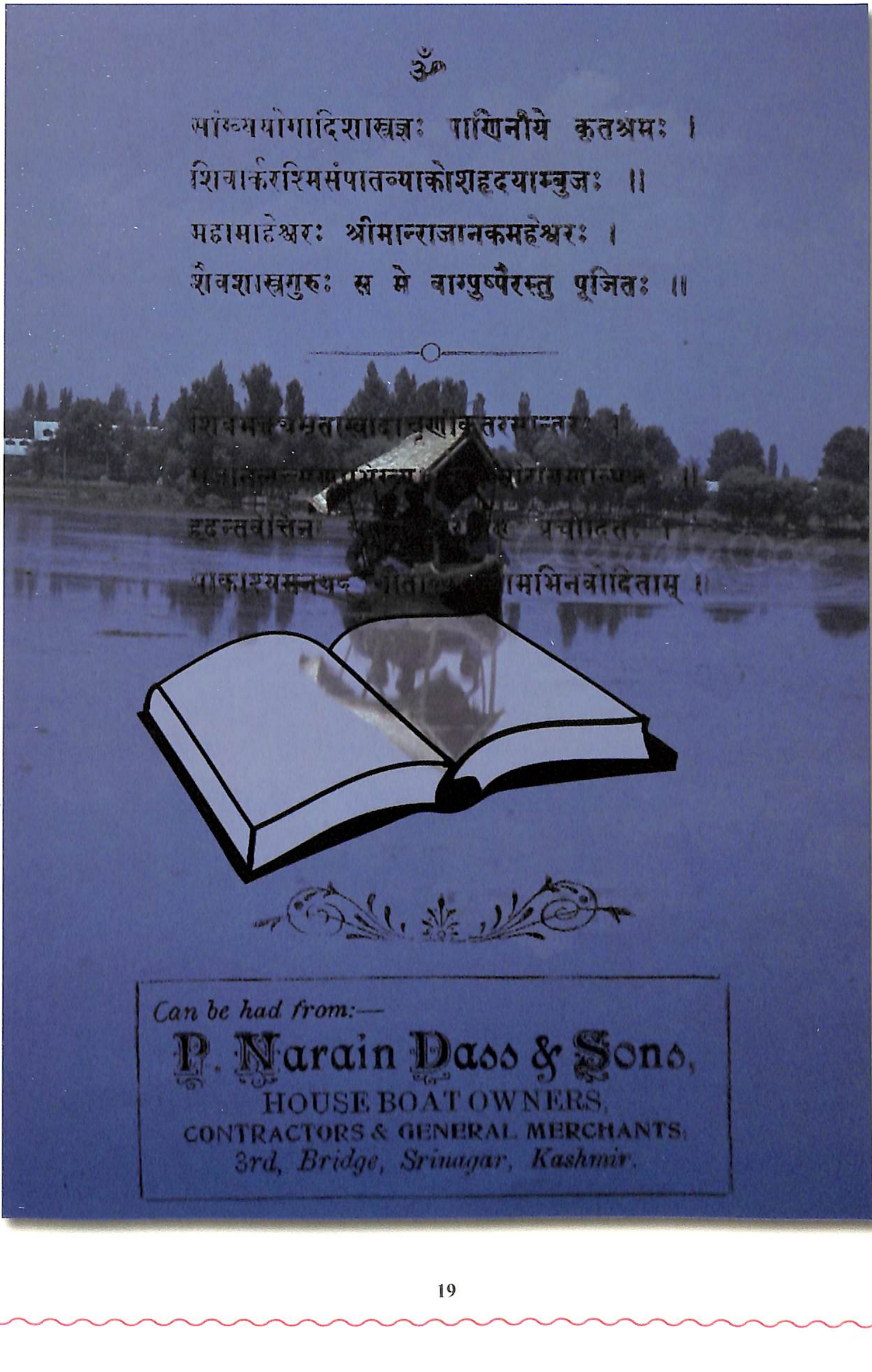
He was very keen that all the children would do this for one hour at a time. When a child would open his or her eyes before time, Swamiji would gently ask to resume the practice again. After an hour of practice, he would ask them to lie down on one side, with one hand, under the head. "This posture cools down the nervous system," he explained.

He told his devotees, "Children are so close to the state of Nirvikalpa (thoughtlessness). They just have to make a small effort and they can realize God."

Swamiji's first publication

When Swamiji was 25 years old, he worked intensely to publish a copy of Abhinavagupta's commentary of the Bhagavad Gita in Sanskrit. When he had completed the draft, he went to his father and asked: "Father, I have written a book and want to get it published so I need a sum of 1000 rupees." In those days 1000 rupees was a lot of money, so his father asked him whether he really wanted to go ahead with this endeavour. Swamiji stood firm. He also applied a simple logic to the situation. He asked his father, "If I was to get married, how much would you have to spend ?" His father replied, "About 3000 rupees." Swamiji smiled and said, "Well, you know I shall never marry in my life, so, from the money you would have to spend, give me 1000 rupees!"

His father was amused and impressed by his son's argument and gave him the amount he needed. The message: Be kind and polite to parents. Discuss your problem with them and they will help you in the best possible manner.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Swamijii- A strict vegetarian

Throughout his life even from the time he was a child, Swamiji was opposed to eating meat. In his childhood, once his mother tried to trick him into eating meat by telling him that meat came from trees. Even then he rejected it. Swamiji would never eat at anyone's house unless they stopped eating or cooking meat.

He stressed that it should be one's duty not only to maintain a strict vegetarian lifestyle but also to loudly oppose the killing of animals and the taking of meat.

Swamiji used to say: "One should not kill animals and serve meat at the time of celebrations such as marriage celebrations or for our own self-satisfaction or in rituals or in hosting your near and beloved ones. Why should you kill an innocent being and take its life because of your enjoyment or disbelief?"

Swamiji's respect for his teachers and elders

The following incidents reveal the high standards set by Swamiji for his elders and teachers. When Swamiji met his guru (spiritual master) for the first time, he was told by him to come on a specific day for the first lesson. Swamiji was so excited on night before that he could not sleep at all. As a result of this excitement, Swamiji meticulously studied under his teacher. He also took utmost care of him when he was not well in his later life.

Swamiji also served his parents meticulously, taking care of their health and their needs during their later years. Another incident later in his life tells us how he revered his teachers even when he was a fully realized saint. On a visit to the ashram of his guru's guru (Swami Ramji), long after Swami Ramji had physically passed away, Swamiji sat down before the photograph of Swami Ramji in a cross-legged posture. A devotee of Swamiji, feeling that Swamiji would be tired, got a pillow and placed it behind his back for support. An enraged Swamiji flung the pillow away. Looking tersely at the devotee he said, "How can I dare to keep a pillow for myself when I am sitting in front of my guru s guru?"

This was Swamiji's way of giving the message of respecting elders and teachers.

Swamiji- His concern for children

Many incidents in Swamiji's life revealed his love and reverence for spirituality. The name of God itself used to make him excited. During the winter months, Swamiji used to visit Jammu and stay at his brother's place where all devotees would converge every evening to seek blessings of the master. During these discourses, many children of his devotees used to sit along with elders and Swamiji took special care to see that they were kept involved in the discourse. At one such evening, Swamiji was sitting on his designated couch at his brother's place in Jammu. The devotees were chanting hymns and he was patiently explaining the meaning of these hymns to them one by one. Swamiji suddenly realized that there was no child present in the hall. Rebuking his devotees he asked, "Where are the children? Is there nothing such as God? Is it not important for them to be here?" This set devotees into action and immediately the children in the house and of those of devotees in the neighborhood were summoned to the lecture hall to attend the lecture.

Swamiji The perfect teacher for children

Swamiji believed that children should eat well for physical and mental fitness. In early 1980's, at his brother s house in Jammu, he noticed that children were eating only a little. In a lighter vein, he scolded the children, saying, "You people eat so little. When I was your age, I used to take one big cup of butter, ghee, curd, milk and Gurus (special Kashmiri milk preparation) with my meals". After this incident, all the children were served a small dollop of butter with their evening meals in Swamiji's presence.

On another occasion, he found that a child had developed a habit of shaking his leg while sitting. He did not have any illness but just had acquired this habit. Swamiji pointed this out to his mother and said, "Have you not noticed what your son does? Why have you not asked him to stop this habit? A mother should be aware of all the shortcomings of her child and correct them as early as possible". Then he made the child sit in front of him every evening for 1-2 weeks, keeping a watchful eye. This was the end of leg shaking for the child.

Taking care of livestock

Swamiji loved all animals, especially cows. In fact, for many years he himself maintained a cowshed in the ashram where 5-10 cows were taken care of at any given time. The milk from the cows was used for the ashram kitchen.

Many of the poorer householders from the nearby villages would often approach Swami Lakshman Joo when their cows unexpectedly stopped giving milk. For some the sale of milk was the only source of income, and a non-milking cow was considered a great burden on such households. In such cases, Swamiji would take a small handful of sugar, whisper a few sacred words and instruct the villager to give the sugar to the cow directly. The next day, the cow would start giving milk in abundance!

Over a period of almost sixty years, Swamiji must have treated almost every cow in the local village. Needless to say, in the market place, milk from his local village was considered superior!

Trip to Gosonigund

In his early youth, Swamiji once decided to go to Gosonigund. This place was famous because it had the ashram of the great saint Swami Atma Ram. Swamiji wanted to go there to do meditation and spiritual practice. He left home early one morning and started on the journey. As he was going, he met an acquaintance who told him that he was aware of the way and would accompany him to Gosonigund. Both of them carried on with the journey. After a few hours, Swamiji started feeling hungry. It was about 2.30 PM at this time and he had not taken anything since morning. His Kashmiri acquaintance told him – "I have some relatives close by. Let us both go and have food there."

On reaching the house, he went inside, asking Swamiji to wait outside. After some time, having had food, he came out. He told Swamiji that there was food for only one person in their household and that is why he did not call Swamiji in. Although very hungry at this stage, Swamiji continued the journey. After a few minutes, Swamiji suddenly remembered that while leaving home he had made some "halwa" (sweet porridge). He had kept this in his basket. He sat down and opened his basket. Taking out the "halwa" he ate half of it. He then gave the other half to his acquaintance. He thought the gentleman was his partner for the journey and therefore deserved to have half of what he had. He did not consider the fact that his friend had already taken a meal, and that too alone, while he was waiting outside the house.

Moral of the story: Be sharing with your colleagues and friends, even in the face of adversity.

The little girl and her birthday party

A little six year old girl living in the same neighborhood of Swamiji's ashram was very excited. She had not been able to sleep the night before, as this was her first big birthday party. She had invited over thirty children from her school to the party. Swamiji told her he would visit their home after the children had eaten. Her parents and their friends had decorated their home with colorful decorations and balloons, games were prepared, many delicious dishes were cooked, and a large chocolate birthday cake was baked. All the children were supposed to arrive at the party by 2:00 pm. As the clock struck 2:00 the birthday girl could not contain her excitement. However, no one showed up. An hour went by, still no one arrived. Her parents tried to make her feel better by telling her that it was a long way from the city of Srinagar and maybe the children were still coming. However, by 4:00pm it was quite obvious that they were not coming.

The birthday girl felt so sad. With tears in her eyes, she sat in the middle of the garden looking at the balloons, the chairs and tables that had been set up with colorful table cloths, and the sad faces of her parents and their friends. At that moment Swamiji walked through the main gate in his dark grey pheran (Kashmiri gown). He came right up to the girl and wished her

a happy birthday and applied tilak on her forehead. Everyone bowed down to Swamiji and completed their pranams.

The parents of the girl gave her a beautiful marigold garland which she put over Swamiji's head. Swamiji smiled and made her sit on his lap. When he did so, the girl felt happier, lighter and did not care that any of the friends had not shown up for her birthday.

Swamiji then had all of the adults play the games that had been scheduled for the birthday. They all became like children again, laughing, playing, and jumping in the presence of Swamiji. It became a magical birthday, as the most im¬portant person had come to join in the celebration!

Sayings of Swamiji for children

1 Take care to develop good habits in childhood because you cannot change them later.

2 Try to remember God at all times; during work, during play, during everything you do.

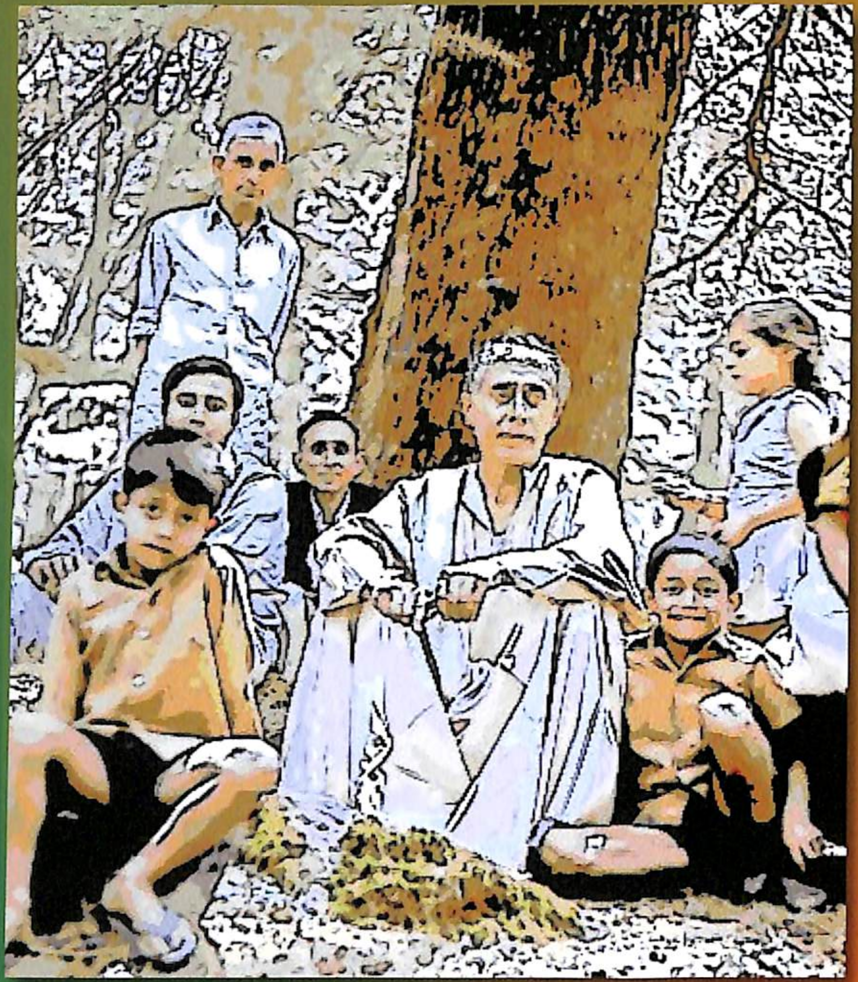
3 Begin meditation at a young age. It is much easier to achieve concentration when you are a child and free from useless thoughts.

4 Learn to forgive your enemies and people who have harmed you; that is real forgiving.

5 God and Individual are one. This is the essence of Kashmir Shaivism.

6 Be truthful always. Do not lie even as a joke. This will make your character strong and firm.

Jai Gurudev!



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